

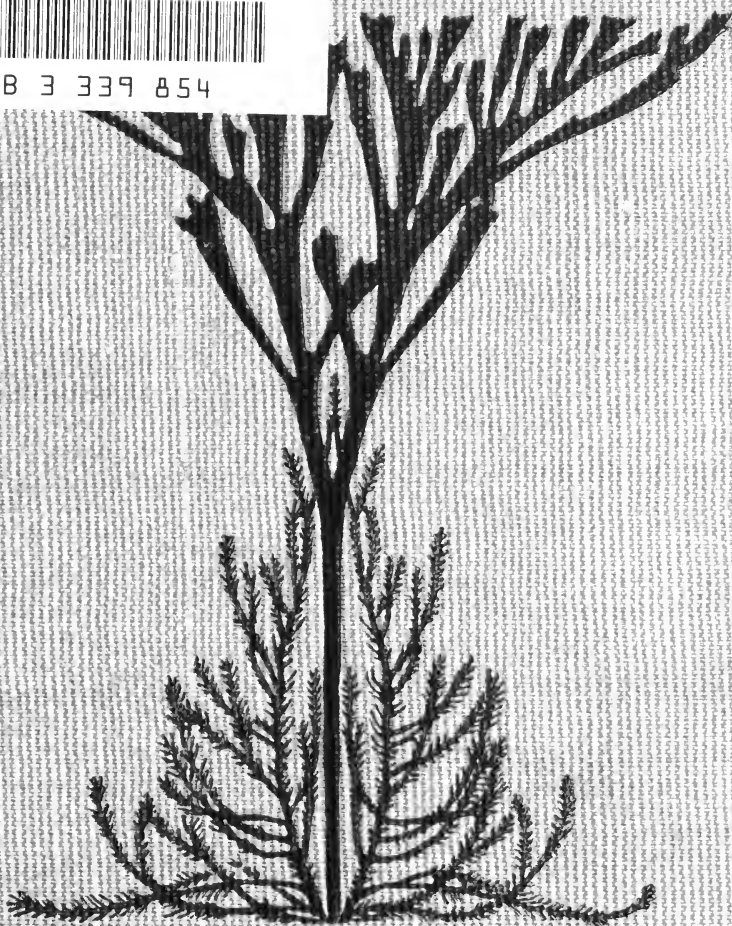
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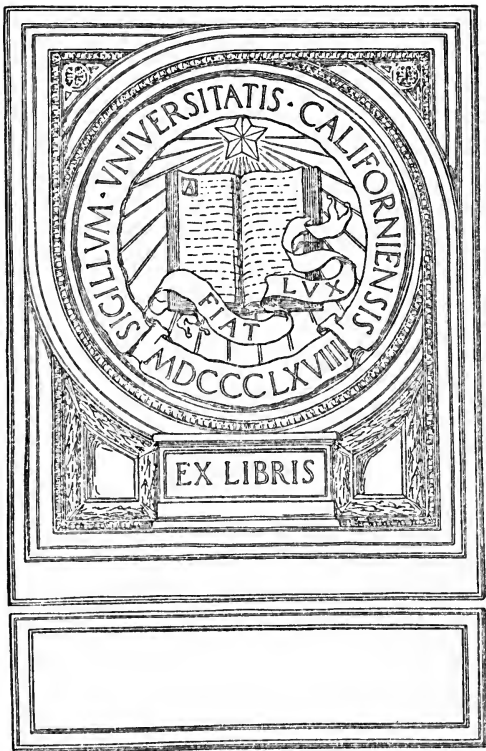
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TO
MY MOTHER AND FATHER
WITH MY LOVE

M191892

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THE LEGEND OF DAVID OF BETHLEHEM

A strange story, say those who hear it, and verily they speak the truth: for the verity of the tale I cannot vouch, because, as with most legends, one finds it difficult to tell where fact and fancy blend, where the actual occurrence and the romance which time and distance have woven about it become one.

Listen then to the story which is told concerning this lad, David of Bethlehem, and whether or no you believe the tale to be true, remember, that the One Whose birth he declared taught that it is to the poor and simple of the earth, that God reveals His deepest mysteries.

I

It was the month, Chisleu, and the cool night winds blew down the valley and across the fields which lay but a short distance from the little town of Bethlehem: the wind brought with it the cold breath of snow from the mountains, and a company of shepherds who, with their flocks, were passing the night in this valley-like field, drew closer to the pleasant warmth of their camp-fire, as the shadows settled lower and the last light which had been reflected from the mountains of Moab, faded and was lost in the darkness of the night. It was very still in the valley: once the hush was broken by shouts from the road, leading to Bethlehem: the shepherds had eaten their simple evening meal, and now sat talking, while their faithful dogs lay at their feet and, nearby in the cot or fold, the white sheep slept secure.

"The town is full of pilgrims," a shepherd said, as the shouts of the wayfarers upon the highway, were borne to them. "I was there this morning, and the Inn was already crowded and there were many more travellers upon the road; 'tis a fair home, is Bethlehem, and many return to her, with love in their hearts."

A man with dark, heavy hair and fierce, black eyes, who had been gazing into the fire, now looked up and spoke:—

"Nay," he said, "not with love, but with hate; hate for the accursed Romans, for this must every true Israelite bear in his heart: that they should command this journey, and in the winter-season, too! Dared I, gladly would I slay each of the accursed ones as I meet them." He glared sullenly at his companions from beneath his dark brows and fingered the long, pointed knife, which hung at his belt, as if, in pleasant fancy, he already felt it piercing the heart of one of the hated oppressors of his country.

"'Tis, verily, a hard journey for many," rejoined the first speaker. "I met as I returned, this evening, a man, come down from the far hill-country, from Nazareth, methinks, he said; his wife was with him, she was young and wondrous fair but sore in need of rest and shelter and he told me there was no room for them at the Inn; I should have made them go to mine own house but my brother is come with all his family from the south, and the house is even now, over full."

"This journey and taxing, at the command of a Roman dog," muttered the dark man. "Now, an' Messiah would come, we might be free! I would be one of the first to strike the blow."

"The promises are long of fulfillment," said an

old shepherd, whose snow white hair and beard showed that he had indeed, waited long; "but the God of our fathers will surely not forsake us."

So they talked, these simple shepherds, of their hopes and fears, of their hatred of the Roman tyrant, and of their longing for liberty, and so interested did they become, that it was the hour of the second watch before they lay down to rest, leaving one of their number on guard.

He was a quiet, gentle lad, of some seventeen or eighteen years, who had sat silent during the evening, scarcely ever joining in the conversation of his companions: he was strong and well-formed, and like unto David of old—and the boy too, bore the name of David and claimed descent from the royal house;—he was ruddy and of a fair countenance, his head crowned with golden curls, and his eyes of wondrous blue; and those eyes seemed ever looking beyond the walls of his quiet village home, across the valley to the mountains beyond, or higher still into the cloud-flecked sky; and when he looked on lowly things, it was as if he saw more deeply than most men into the mysteries which God has hid in the little things of earth: the sheep of his flock loved him, the tender lambs bleating in answer to his voice; the other shepherds would watch wonderingly, to see him pluck from the thorny scrub of the pasture, a fair lily and gaze into its depths, as if he expected to read there some marvellous story: they, too, loved the boy, but they shook their heads as they talked of him, for he was not like other lads and seldom joined in their simple village sports and pastimes but wandered through the fields and over the hills, singing to himself the songs of ancient Israel and of its warrior king.

David drew his shepherd's cloak about him and settled himself for the long watch; he pondered over the conversation of his companions and fell to wondering when the long-promised Messiah would come to redeem Israel: later, into his mind, came the memory of his visit to Jerusalem, at the last Passover, and again he stood in fancy, gazing at the wondrous beauty of the Temple; he was in Solomon's Porch, near to the Beautiful Gate and before him lay the City of the Great King, resplendent in the morning light, while beyond were the hills which stand 'round about Jerusalem; he heard the blowing of the trumpets, saw the great multitude hurrying to the worship of the living God and over all there seemed borne to him the chanting of the Hallel.

Thus he pondered, so deeply, indeed, that he knew not the passing of the second watch; the wind had ceased to blow, and a wondrous stillness rested over the valley, while in the deep blue vault of heaven, the myriad stars shone bright. David, with upturned face, sat by the dying fire and gazed into the pure light of God's bright stars, and as he gazed, a new light shone about him,—a wondrous light, which seemed to fall, in one great, pulsing beam from Heaven, and then to brighten and to spread, until the whole valley was as clear as in the day; but most wonderful of all, upon this beam of radiant, pulsing light an angel stood with holy, beauteous face and outstretched hands.

David and his suddenly awakened companions, fell upon their faces, for They Were Sore Afraid.

And The Angel Said Unto Them: "Fear not; For Behold, I Bring You Good Tidings Of Great

Joy, Which Shall Be To All People. For Unto You Is Born This Day In The City Of David, A Saviour, Which Is Christ The Lord. And This Shall Be A Sign Unto You; Ye Shall Find The Babe, Wrapped In Swaddling Clothes, And Lying In A Manger."

And, Suddenly There Was With The Angel A Multitude Of The Heavenly Host Praising God And Saying:—"Glory To God In The Highest, And On Earth, Peace, Goodwill Toward Men."

The lad, David raised his head and looked and listened, as the wondrous hymn rang out in tones no man can fancy or describe, and echoed and re-echoed through the peaceful valley: And It Came To Pass, As The Angels Were Gone Away Into Heaven, The Shepherds Said One To Another—"Let Us Now Go Even Unto Bethlehem, And See This Thing, which The Lord Hath Made Known Unto Us."

So they went towards Bethlehem, but David went as one in a dream, for he, alone, had looked full at the marvellous light and into his heart, the angelic song had entered, never to be forgotten.

And They Came, With Haste, And Found Mary And Joseph, And The Babe, Lying In A Manger. And When They Had Seen It They Made Known Abroad The Saying Which Was Told Them, Concerning This Child, and while all men wondered and many doubted, the shepherds declared again and again the sight which they had seen, and the message of the angel: but from that early morning the boy, David, was not the same; he followed or led his flock no more, but wandered, sometimes about the town but more often up and

down the valleys and over the hills and neighboring heights, and ever his eyes seemed seeking something not of earth; and the while he repeated again and again the story of that winter's night and sang in a voice of wondrous sweetness the words of the angels' song.

For a year he wandered thus, and then it came to pass that he was seen no more: some shepherds had heard his voice among the hills in the late twilight and men from the village searched for him for many days, but they found no trace of him in any place. The days passed and his old mother who had loved him, died and was buried, and it was so, that as the months and years passed away and naught was heard of him, little by little, the villagers forgot the lad, David of Bethlehem.

II

It was some sixty years after the birth of Christ, at the time when all the world was bending beneath the tyranny of the powerful and cruel Nero, that two guards of the great prison, in the city of Alexandria, sat talking together as they ate their evening meal.

"He is a strange old man," said one, "and though assuredly crazy, it hardly seems worth the while to confine him, for methinks he is scarce likely to commit any deed of hurt; but then our prison is not like to become crowded, so great is its size."

"Is he not one of these Christians?" asked the other, as he quaffed his measure of wine.

His companion shrugged his shoulders: "I know not," he said. "'Tis a strange story he tells, of angels singing and lights shining, and like wondrous tales: I know naught of these new, strange doctrines, may the gods preserve me from meddling with them."

"But this old man," suggested his companion. "What of him?"

"O, he is beside himself, as I told thee, and near to death, too, may the gods help him; I took him food, but he will not eat, and he walks about his cell and tries to sing, when, poor old man, he has no more voice with which to sing, than has my scab-bard yonder; again he kneels, as if to pray and mutters to himself of Bethlehem, and where that is I surely do not know."

"Bethlehem," repeated the other soldier, "Bethlehem, Ah, I can tell thee; I had a brother who

served with the legions in Palestine, and I have heard him speak of Bethlehem; this strange old man must come from that place; what more?"

His companion laughed: "By the gods," he said, "you are as anxious to hear strange and unlike tales as any old woman, and I have no more to tell; but, and you are so eager to know of this old man, you shall go and see him for yourself, when next I make my round."

Meantime, in a narrow cell of the prison, an old man lay, as if exhausted, upon his pallet-bed: his eyes were closed, and his hands clasped tightly upon his breast; he was weak and worn and one could see that his must have been a life of wandering, for his weary feet were hardened by travel and his thin face was burned with the suns of many lands: indeed, it would have been difficult to recognize in this wasted dying old man, a prisoner in a distant land, the fair-haired boy who watched his flock in the valley nigh to Bethlehem, on the first Christmas-eve.

But it was, indeed, he, whose long, strange life was drawing to a close within these prison walls.

From the day when the Judean shepherds sought in vain for the lad, he had wandered through the countries of the earth, ever telling his marvellous story and singing in a voice of wondrous sweetness, the song the angels sang.

From Jerusalem and other cities of his own land he had wandered to the towns and hamlets of Syria; by the shores of the sea, and in the market-places of Tyre and Sidon he had sweetly talked and sung. Through Greece he had travelled, and had even stood upon Mars Hill, at Athens, and sung his song

and told his marvellous story, but how should those who would later scoff at the teachings of the great Apostle Paul be likely to give heed to the strange tale of a half-crazed man?

Once he had come to Ephesus, where one named John, hearing the man's story, took him to his house, and told him things yet more marvellous and had him baptized into the Christian Faith; still David tarried there but a short time, and then resumed his wanderings.

He had lived for months among the wild northern tribes, and his journeyings had taken him to many places of which the proud legions of Rome knew not. He had suffered shipwreck and many perils of sea and land and ofttimes had he been imprisoned; indeed, for a year, he had lain in the wards of the Imperial City, but then, as since, he had been released as a crazy but harmless man, scarce worthy the time of trial and execution.

Once he suffered for many weeks, his strength sapped by burning fever, and at last nursed back to health, by the dark-eyed children of the tropics; but as he grew older, his step became feeble and the voice which sang the angelic message, finally lost its depth and sweetness.

Still the old man wandered: men laughed and scoffed at him, women pitied him, but the little children always loved him; and whether they were blue-eyed sons and daughters of the north, or brown-skinned babes of the southlands, they sat upon his knee, and stroked and kissed his face, and smiled while he sang to them, for, though they knew not the meaning of his words, their childish hearts were

touched by the melody of that song, which had welcomed to this world the Kingly Child.

Again the season of that wondrous song had come; another Christmas was about to dawn upon the earth: the night was nearly over, and within the prison cell, watched by the two curious but pitying guards, the aged prisoner tossed upon his narrow bed now and again talking of things far in the past: and in his thirst, like David of old, he longed for a drink of water from the village well at Bethlehem, his childhood home, among the Judean hills.

“Poor old man; give him a drink”; exclaimed one of the guards, and while his companion raised the wasted form, he poured some water between the prisoner’s dry, parched lips. Revived by the drink, the old man roused, as from a stupor, and babbled of a marvellous scene, of angels and of glowing lights; he saw beyond the damp, dark prison walls, and out, out to the hill-encompassed pastures of the Holy Land; the night wind brought sweet scents adown the valley, in their cot the white sheep slept secure, and over all the quiet stars shone bright.

Midnight was passed, when, with a sudden effort, the old man rose, and standing guant and tall with snowy locks and flowing beard, he raised his hand and pointing upwards, cried aloud:—

“See,” his voice rang out, “the angels, and the lights,—and, hark the song.”

His breast heaved, and suddenly, from his parted lips, there came a song of such marvellous sweetness, that it seemed, as if, indeed, an angel sang:—

“Glory To God In The Highest, And on Earth,
Peace, Good-will To Men.”

Through the cell rang the exquisite melody, penetrating even the solid walls and forcing its way to other cells, and to prisoners who there lay bound and who had never before and would never again, on this earth, harken to strains which echoed, thus, the worship of high Heaven.

As the wondrous song ended, the aged prisoner sank upon his knees, his hands clasped, and his head thrown backward, for his earth-dimmed eyes beheld such fair, fair visions,—fairer e'en than those of the Judean plains; the old man's journeyings were well-nigh ended; he stood upon the border-land of the Celestial Country, and gazed into the fair fields of God's sweet Paradise; and as the faint dawn of that Christmas Day brightened the eastern sky, a soul went into the Presence of the Prince of Peace, the story of Whose wondrous coming to this earth had so long been told and sung, by David of Bethlehem.

THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Once again, the sweet true story,
Of the Prince of Life and Glory,
 And His lowly birth;
Read by ignorant and sages
From those God-inspired pages,
Brings the message down the ages:
 "Peace, good-will to earth."

'Tis the song of Heaven's choir,
Singing praises to Messiah,
 Many years ago.
While the shepherds stood all-fearing,
First the glorious message hearing,
And the heavenly light, appearing,
 Shone with wondrous glow.

"Haste ye now to David's city";
See the Lord of love and pity
 In a manger laid.
He shall give life to the dying;
Light to those in darkness lying;
Soothe the hearts with sorrow crying,
 As the prophets said.

'Tis to those whose hearts are weary,
And whose ways seem dark and dreary,
That the words of love
Come, sweet peace and comfort bringing,
While the angel voices singing
 Tell of joys above.

'Tis to rich, to great, to holy,
To the weak and poor and lowly,
 All who love His name,
That the message appertaineth;
For within their hearts He reigneth,
 'Tis for these He came.

Hear we, then, the message ringing,
As the angel voices singing,
 On that Christmas morn,
Earth and sky and ocean bounding,
And all lands with joy surrounding,
Sent the glad words ever sounding,
 "Christ, the Lord, is born."

CHRISTMAS

Still once more as the years go by,
We come again to this Holy Night;
And we seem to see with our fancy's eye,
The Star shine clear in the Christmas sky,
All aglow with the wondrous light.

Quiet and still is Judea's plain,
As the shepherds watch by their dying fire.
Midnight is passed. Hark, the joyous strain
Sounding and echoing again and again,
Sung by the singers of Heaven's choir.

For there in the city of Israel's King
A little child is born this day.
No wonder it is that the Seraphs sing,
That heavenly Alleluias ring
And that angels their homage pay.

For as the Scriptures have ever read:
From Bethlehem-Judah shall come the King;
And shepherds, bowed at His lowly bed,
Behold their King, as the Prophet said:
'Tis Messiah's birth that the Angels sing.

And we join today with a perfect right
To sing His praises, for this we know:
That shepherds lowly and angels bright
Worshipped Him under the Christmas light
In Bethlehem-Judah long years ago.

THE CHRIST-BLUME

A Legend of the Black Forest

'Twas the eve of the blessed Christmas,
The snow fell thick and fast,
And Hans, the woodman, shivered
As he faced the angry blast.
Onward he went towards his cottage,
But his heart was very sad;
For he'd naught at this joyous season
To make his children glad.

As he hurried on through the forest,
He was startled the sound to hear,
Above the roar of the winter's storm,
Of a child's voice, sweet and clear.
He searched, and found, 'neath a mighty oak
Which grew by the cottage door,
A child more fair than any child
He ever had seen before.

He raised the child in his arms with care,
And carried it in with him,
Where his two small children gathered 'round
In the fire-light, poor and dim.
Wee Gretchen gave her own brown crust
For the beauteous child to eat;
And Hanchen, too, gave his coat to wrap
The cold and tired feet.

The mother held him until he slept,
Then laid him upon her bed,
And the fire-light threw a radiance
Like a halo, 'round his head.

And so they rested ; but when the sun
 Rose on that Christmas morn,
And threw its light o'er the fair, white world,
 The stranger child was gone.
He had spoken no word, and they knew him not,
 But for love of the Saviour mild
They had warmed, and fed of their little store,
 Even this little child.

And a sweet and gracious fragrance,
 Like incense, floated round,
And Hanchen found, 'neath the old oak tree,
 Grown in the frozen ground,
A group of fair blue flowers
 The cottage door-step nigh,
Which seemed to lift their little heads
 In praise to God on high.

And in each little flower
 Was a heart of purest gold.
'Tis the tale of the fair Christ-blume,
 As read in the legends old ;
And they say 'twas the blessed Christ-Child
Who came from Heaven above,
And left the fair blue flowers
 As tokens of His love.

THE CHRISTMAS ROSE

A Legend of Palestine

Long years ago, in a far-off land,
On the first, great Christmas morn,
The angels offered glad songs of praise,
When the sweet Christ-Child was born.

The lowly shepherds came hastily,
With wonder, the Babe to greet,
And offered their simple homage,
At the holy Christ-Child's feet.

While journ'ying, too, came the Three Wise Men,
Led on by the shining Star;—
Who offered the Christ-Child, precious gifts,
Borne over the deserts, afar.

But a certain little Jewish lad
Who dwelt by the lowly place,
Stood weeping sadly, while the tears
Streamed down his ruddy face.

And as he wept, an angel bright,
Stood near, and asked the boy;—
“My child, why is it that you weep,
At this glad time of joy?”

“I've never a gift,” the child replied
To this spirit, from above;
“To give to yon little Baby fair,
To show him of my love.”

“Thou shalt have a gift,” the angel said,
“Behold thy tear”; and there,

Where the lad's tear fell, as he wept so sore,
Was a rose-bud, sweet and fair.

"Now take this gift," the angel said,
"As an offering of thy love."
And the rose was touched by the morning light,
Like a radiance, from above.

Then the boy did haste, with his offering,
And Mary, sweet and mild,
Held the rose, before her Baby's eyes,
And the little Christ-Child smiled.

And when, now, in the dead of winter,
The roses bloom and grow ;
'Tis because of the little lad's off'ring,
In Bethlehem, long ago.

THE BABUSHKA

A Russian Christmas Legend

Gathered 'round the glowing fire,
As the Christmas-tide draws near,
'Tis this legend, which the children
Of the Russian peasant hear.

O'er the desert, journ'ying westward,
Came the Wise Men, from afar;
Following, with joyful wonder,
That mysterious, beaming Star.

Nestled in a green oasis,
Stood a cottage, neat and small;
Here the wearied Wise Men rested,
'Neath the grateful palm-trees tall.

And they urged the agéd woman,
Who dwelt there, beside the spring;—
"Leave thine house, and with us journey
To do homage, to the King."

But she answered, "Nay, my masters;
I must bake and brew, today,
But, when all my work is finished,
I will follow on your way."

All that day the busy house-wife
Laboured, with no thought of rest;
And her labour was not ended,
Till the sun sank, in the west.

"But tomorrow, I will follow,"
Thought she, and an offering
Of her cakes and sweets she gathered,
To bear with her to the King.

So she started on her journey,
O'er the desert, westwardly;
But no sign of the Three Strangers
Or their pathway could she see.

Still she journeyed, and is journeying—
So 'tis said, unto this day,
Ever hoping she may find Him
Whom she lost by her delay.

Ev'ry year, as comes His birth-time,
To the children, does she bring
Gifts; still in her sad heart hoping,
Thus to find the Infant King.

They are His, Who on that Christmas,
Came to earth, an Infant mild;
So, perhaps, the sad Babushka
Really serves the fair Christ-Child.

AN EASTER MIRACLE

In the cold, dark earth of the garden,
Afar by the eastern wall,
A small brown bulb I planted
One day in the early fall.

Then I watched, as the days passed onward,
But I saw no sign of life;
So I said, "I will watch no longer."
Though my heart with pain was rife.

When long days and months had flown,
One glorious Easter morn,
I walked in the dew-wet garden
As soon as the day was born;

For I searched to find some flower,
'Mongst all those blossoms sweet,
Worthy to lie on the altar
At my risen Saviour's feet.

As I walked towards the eastern corner,
I saw, in the sun's first rays,
A spray of fair white lillies
With their faces raised in praise;

Up to the sky above them,
And up to the sun's clear light,
Which filled each flower with beauty
As they bloomed there fair and white.

Then I fell on my knees in wonder,
At the miracle thus wrought,
And I thanked my Lord for the lesson
By the beauteous flowers taught.

For the little bulb once planted
In the earth so dark and cold,
Had grown to these fair white lilies
Bright with the sunlight gold.

And now I know how a "corn of wheat
Must fall in the ground and die."
And that those laid away with sorrow
Shall live beyond the sky.

That day, 'neath the Cross, on the Altar,
The lilies bloomed fair and white,
While we sang of the resurrection
Of the Lord of Life and Light.

FROM DARKNESS UNTO LIGHT

The earth is silent, hushed in awful sorrow:
The breeze of heaven comes with sobbing breath,
As if celestial beings, from God's high throne,
Bend low in grief, for One, laid still in death.

See where the shadows of yon gloomy garden
Stretch; where the night winds sadly moan and
sigh:

Hark to the murmuring Kedron's bitter waters:
Behold that tomb, wherein One dead doth lie.

Fall down, my soul, in deep and bitter anguish;
On the cold ground, keep watch throughout the
night;

Thy Master lies within that sealéd prison,
Whereon doth fall the paschal moon's pale light.

And what but sin has caused thy Master's suffer-
ings?
Sin of a thousand souls, like unto thee;

Sin, from whose thralling bonds the Lord, Who loved
thee,
Hath died; that by His death, thou might'st be
free.

Canst thou repay such boundless love and pity,
Thou who dost fall so oft, from day to day?
Thou canst but kneel beside His tomb, and watch-
ing
Through the long night, in deepest anguish, pray.

Deep and more deeply still the shadows gather,
In that dark hour which comes before the dawn;
But hope, my soul, for with a radiant splendor,
Is breaking now, the Resurrection morn.

Thy night of anguished prayer, in joy is ended,
The darksome shadows from the earth have fled,
Sorrow is past; for in a light transcendent,
Thy Master, Christ, is risen from the dead!

Then rise, my soul! The Easter morning breaking,
Must find thee hast'ning forward on thy way,
To tell the world, that Christ the Lord is risen;
That o'er the earth, no longer death holds sway.

Yet ere thou haste, draw near, though scarce thou
darest,
To offer Him a gift so poor, so small;
In the fair radiance of this Easter morning,
Give to thy Lord thy love, thy life, thine all.

Then bear abroad, the joyous Easter Message
To souls still bound in suffering and sin;
Tell how He raiseth them and giveth courage
To fight; and, in His strength, the fight to win.

Tell how thy Master hath, in love, redeemed thee,
Bound as thou wert in darkness of the night.
All through the day, declare His power and glory;
That He, thy Saviour, giveth life and light.

Then when the Resurrection day is over;
When from thy task of love, thou find'st release,
Out of the hush of silence of the evening,
Thy risen Lord shall speak, and give His Peace.

ASCENSION LILIES

Ascension lilies, pure and fair and white,
Lifting their faces to the morning light,
This holy day;
Now kept in memory of the time, when He,
Who taught beside the blue Tiberian sea,
And from the hills of lowly Galilee,
Went far away.

And left the men who knew so well His love,
Gazing in wonder at the clouds above
Fair Olivet:
Where He had led them that Ascension morn,
When all the earth was touched with fairest dawn,
And blessing them, in clouds aloft was borne;
Nor cometh yet.

But angels fair, who welcomed back their King,
Ceased the triumphant hymns the hosts did sing,
And bending low;
Told to these waiting ones, how to their sight,
The Lord, enthroned in glory, power and might,
Should come when they had brought unto His light;
All things below.

Then as they went, in wondering and fear,
Still longing for the Master's presence dear,
Nor strengthened yet;
They found along the pathway He had trod
While last on earth, the mighty Son of God,
White lilies fair, upon a firm green rod,
'Neath Heaven set.

All sprung to life, where last His sacred feet
Had touched the earth. Ascension lilies sweet.
Then seemed He near.
And so He gives, as flowers to mark the way,
A path from which His children may not stray,
The sequence of each glad and holy day;
The Christian Year.

And if we follow from the Holy Birth,
On through the life of Him Who dwelt on earth,
In wondrous love;
Watch, fast, and pray, with Him through that dark
night
Which ends in radiant resurrection light,
We shall behold Him in His glorious might,
Ascend above.

'Tis thus the Master marks the path below,
That where He trod we need not fear to go;—
A path of light
Which leads us onward to His presence blest.
So we, who on the upward path have pressed,
And come at last unto the holy rest
Of Paradise, shall in its fields so bright,
Gather Ascension lilies, pure and white.

ALL SAINTS

"THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS"

All Saints; Sweet festival of autumn days,
When peace broods o'er the earth and all is still;
When, through the vailing of autumnal haze,
One sees the outline of each midst-blue hill.

Sweet festival which holds us to the past,
And makes us one, with holy saints of old;
And yet is sacred to those blessed last
Who only in our hearts, their sainthood hold.

O blest communion, which can draw us near
To all the numbers of that mighty host;
Which bids us cease from sorrowing and fear,
And teaches that not one dear saint is lost;

But all, life's journey ended, are at rest
In that new home, which in God's realms lies,
Which by Christ's holy presence has been blest,
And which we love to call God's Paradise.

We cannot know, we cannot dream the life,
Led by the souls whom God has called to rest;
But this we know, that free from pain and strife,
They wait the resurrection of the blest.

May it not be, that called so soon from earth,
God has for some a higher work to do?
These souls empowered by a glorious birth,
To lead still other souls to knowledge new?

And with that peace which comes into our days
A wondrous presence all about us thrills;

An all-encircling myst'ry, like the haze,
Which wraps in silver vail the mist-blue hills.

While through the tender stillness, as in dreams,
The voice of some dear saint comes from afar
With words of loving converse; and it seems
The gates of Paradise must stand ajar.

So keeps the church, the feast, wherein are we,
Drawn nearer to the saints whom still we love;
Until those waiting, and on earth shall be,
The great Triumphant Church, in Heaven above.

SANCTISSIMA MATER DEI

The legend connected with Holbein's famous Madonna in the Dresden Gallery

The son of the Burgomaster,
A child of summers three,
Lay sick of a deadly fever,
Upon his mother's knee.
His eyes were glazed with anguish,
And gasping was his breath;
Despite the leech's knowledge,
Near was relentness death.

Now fair was the child to look on,
Beloved by everyone;
The joy of the burgomaster;
His hope, his only son.
But those who watched beside him,
Their hearts with anguish rife,
Knew that soon, death must conquer
The child's weak spark of life.

Then spake the Burgomaster:—
 "The child is about to die;
Kneel, kneel and the Holy Virgin
 Mayhap will hear our cry.
Sanctissima Mater Dei,
 O hear our humble prayer;
And heal this child of his sickness,
 For love of thy Son so fair."

Then into the hush of silence,
 Broken but by the infant's moan,
 And the voice of the anguished mother,
 As she soothed him in gentle tone,
There came a wondrous presence,
 The Mother of the Lord;
And in her arms, she carried
 The Son of the most high God.

And she placed Him down among them,
 As they knelt all wondering there,
To see how the Holy Mother,
 Had answered their humble prayer;
And she took from its little cradle,
 The Burgomaster's child,
And held it upon her holy breast,
 Till it ceased to moan, and smiled.

And while they gazed upon her,
 And marvelled as they kneeled,
She stooped, with the little infant
 Of its deathly sickness healed:
Then as it laughed so gaily,
 Released from its fevered pain,
From His lowly place among them,
 She lifted her Son again.

But ere the vision faded;
While they wondered at such grace;
They saw that a look of suff'ring
Had come o'er the Christ-Child's face.
The Burgomaster's baby
Was as well as e'er before,
But his fevered pain and suff'ring,
The Son of Mary bore.

And thus, says the strange old legend,
As He oft should do again,
The Saviour took the suff'ring,
Laid on the sons of men.
Sanctissima Mater Dei,
E'en so thy Holy Son
Suffered upon the Mountain;—
And a world's salvation won.

A LITTLE CHILD

*"Jesus called a little child unto Him." St. Matt.
xviii:2*

A little child; the Master called it to Him,
To stand beside Him as He wisely taught:
The little one could never know the wisdom,
With which the Master's words and acts were
fraught;
It only knew, that here was One so tender,
Withall so full of gentleness and grace,
That childish fears were lost, and childish sorrows
Were soothed, by looking in the Master's face.

And He, who held, and blessed the little children;
Who bade their mothers bring them to His arms;
Who knew, Himself, the pains and joys of child-
hood;

And who would shield them from all fears and
harms;

Has called another child. O, weeping mother,
Who fain would'st clasp thy baby to thy breast,
Fear not; the Master knows thy pain and heart-
ache,

And He would have thee trust in Him, and rest.

We cannot know how, in the years before her,
Thy little one had found the way of life;
The little feet been bruised on the rough pathway;
The tender heart hurt with the world's sad strife;
Some nameless sorrow stilled the merry laughter;
Or suff'ring dimmed her happy eyes with pain;
Friends failed, and love grown cold, with disappoint-
ment,

In striving for the end she could not gain.

From fear of such, saved by His loving mercy,—
Who sees things holden to our mortal eyes;—
The dear child-spirit, fair, unharmed and holy,
Rests 'mid the flow'rs of God's sweet Paradise.
And though, thou can'st not see, with tear-dimmed
vision,

Thou can'st, in sweet communion, deeply love;
And through the Master's grace, thy prayerful sor-
row

Receive a benediction from above.

He blessed, with gracious word the little children,
The mothers brought; they in His love believed.
Made His in baptism, where thou gav'st rejoicing,
Doubt not He hath thy little one received.

O sorrowing mother, in His mercy trusting,
This thought, we pray, shall make thy grief more
mild;

In wise and tender love, the gracious Master
Has called unto Himself **THY** little child.

EVENING

The evening shades are falling; all is rest;
The sun is slowly sinking in the west.

The clouds float o'er me, rose across the blue,
Touched by the sunset to a golden hue.

There comes to me, across the distant swell,
The gentle tinkling of a far-off bell.

Sweet, childish voices, borne upon the wind
Bring happy fancies to my musing mind.

A little bird sings sweetly from its nest:
The flowers droop; the breeze lulls them to rest.

The sun's last rays emblaze the pine-trees tall,
While far away I hear a night-bird's call.

And blue as sapphires lies the lake below,
Its waters moving towards the river's flow.

'Midst all this beauty comes there without cease,
The voice of the Creator saying—"Peace."

GOOD-BYE

“Good-bye.” We say this little word, and part,
Light hearted, for we shall soon shall meet again.
“Good-bye.” ’Tis such a lightsome word to say,
We speak it with no thought of grief or pain:
We have but parted for a summer day;
The time is short, and so “Good-bye,” we say.

“Good-bye.” The birds sing brightly and the sun
Shines all about us with a tender light;
Right gaily is our parting greeting made,
The same words be our friendship great or slight:
Perhaps ’tis the acquaintance of a day,
Or some dear one who o’er our heart holds sway.

It may be with the morrow’s rising sun
We meet again, upon the selfsame road;
And yet it may be that our paths no more
Shall meet, as bending ’neath our lifework’s load,
We travel on ’neath bright or gloomy sky;
And yet at parting we but said—“Good-bye.”

Perhaps one close unto our hearts has passed,
Before us to the strange and misty shore,
And as the quivering breath grew faint and ceased
And when the last sharp pain of life was o’er,
One bent and from a breaking heart gave cry,
In bitter anguish—“O, beloved,—good-bye.”

And thus it is; this greeting as we part,
Until tomorrow, or for many a day;
Though land and sea stretch vastly in between,
Or dear ones pass from this, our earth away:
In hope, in joy, with heartache and with pain
We say, “Good-bye, until we meet again.”

What is the meaning of our parting words?
'Tis "God be with you," that we fain would say;
And meaning this we need no fairer speech,
To speed a friend along life's winding way.
"May God be with you"; hark, those words how
sweet;
"May God be with you, friend, until we meet."

So be it for long years we part, or else
Until the morn; the passing of death's night:
Through gladsome days, or nights of weary toil,
When all seems dark, with no faint gleam of light:
We cry from hearts o'er full of joy or pain,—
"May God be with you, till we meet again."

THE SUNSET-LAND

Come with me, my beloved,
Let us go hand-in-hand,
Together to view the wonders
Of the marvellous Sunset-Land.

Close to the murm'ring waters
Of the never-silent sea;
Over the shining sea-sand,
There let our pathway be.

Dark is the sea, and low'ring
The clouds that conceal the sky,
And the waters pulse, as in anguish,
One sobs, yet may not cry.

Then come with me, come from this sadness,
You and I, hand in hand,
And view from yon towering sand-dune
The wonderful Sunset-Land.

Yonder it stretches, where westward
Gloweth the red and gold ;
Like the lights of the Holy City,
Seen by St. John of old.

Lights from the windows of Heaven,
Shown to us now and again,
Depicting to human fancy,
Beauties beyond our ken.

For the wonderful beauty of sunset
O'er the sky and the land and the sea,
Is a vision of all the beauty,
In the Heavenly City to be.

No sorrow can be there, no sickness,
No trouble, nor suffering, nor pain,
But joy which is stainless and endless
In that marvellous Country shall reign.

So come with me up from the sadness,
From the pulsing, sobbing sea,
Let us fly t'wards the Land of the Sunset,
Where the colors of hope we see.

To the wonderful Land of the Sunset,
Where all must be gladness and love,
And behold there an earthly vision,
Of the glories to be above.

CLOUD-SHIPS

Over the sky, like a sea,
The cloud-ships are sailing,
Led by the light of the moon,
Now shining, now paling.

Out past its fair silver light,
On into the ocean;
Borne on the winds of the night
With swift, wave-like motion.

Far all alone in the sky
A little star shineth;
There, for my cloud-ships, the way
It clearly outlineth.

It points them along to the east,
'Tis there they are going,
Where fair in the rosy dawn
The sun will be glowing.

So in our lives, though the way
Be rough and uneven,
Each one has a light which shall guide
To God and to heaven.

THE STORM-KING

"Make way, for the King; lo, he comes, make way."

'Tis the voice of his herald, the Wind;
And the Storm-King follows, in great array,
In his royal garments, of black and gray,
While his cloud-mantle floats, behind.

In his hand, is a sceptre of forked light,
As onward, he swiftly whirls;
On his head, is a coronet of might,
And shining and sparkling, 'tis wondrous bright,
With raindrops, like countless pearls.

He comes, with a pow'r, which none can resist,
He knows none but Nature's Law;
Would any withstand him, in blinding mist
He 'nshrouds them, till to his commands they list;
And his voice is the thunder's roar.

Yet kind in his might, from a kingly hand,
Where the valleys lie thick with grain,
Where the hills and the mountains in silence stand,
O'er the fields of a dry and thirsty land,
He scatters the drops of rain.

THE DAISY'S MISSION

A little daisy growing in the grass,
Longed to be mighty like the stately trees
Whose branches, reaching upward to the sky,
Were softly rustled by the summer breeze.

"I would that men could rest beneath my shade,
That birds might light upon my branches high,
Here grow I all unheeded, useless, small,"
'This was the daisy's oft repeated cry.

And then one sunny day as it complained
And wished that all these things might come to
pass,
A little lad came running o'er the field,
And stooping, took the daisy from the grass.

He placed it in the white and feeble hand
Of a small child lain sick for many a day,
The fevered eyes grew softer, tossings ceased,
Holding the daisy, still the sick child lay.

She stroked the soft white petals, then she asked;—
"O Brother will you take me where they grow?
When I am well again; O take me please,
I want to see the daisies white as snow."

"I'll take you then to see the mighty trees,
And some of them are very, very old,"
"I do not want the trees," the child replied,
I only want the flowers with hearts of gold."

The little daisy now was comforted
And felt itself abundant in its wealth.
Soothed by the beauty of the little flower,
The child soon slept the sleep of strength and health.

The little daisy thus its work performed,
E'en though it thought itself so poor and small;
A work it surely never could have done
If it had been an oak-tree grand and tall.

So in our lives God gives us power to make
Some other life more pure, more fair, more bright:
Our hearts should then be strong as well-tried gold,
And pure as daisies' petals, fair and white.

DOWN IN THE MEADOW

Down in the sunny field, midst the bright clover,
Nodding and smiling over and over,
Is gay little Timothy, happy to meet
Such a sweet little lady as fair Marguerite.

Sweet Marguerite, with a gown of pure white,
And a heart that is filled with the sun's golden light;
She nods to small Timothy, smiling and gay,
And they talk there together throughout the bright
day.

The blue sky above them is shining and bright
And their small hearts are filled with a joyous de-
light.
The birds whisper secrets as upward they fly,
From the flower decked fields to the blue summer
sky.

Bees search through the clover for honey so sweet
And they borrow a little from fair Marguerite;
Then Timothy says: "You've enough and to spare;
I'd take a kiss too if I only might dare."

Then Marguerite looks at the sky overhead
And pretends to have heard not a word that he said,

But Timothy's smile, the whole story can tell
And Margeurite loves her small sweetheart full
well.

What care these gay lovers if now and again
The dark clouds pile up, and down comes the rain?
They hide their small heads 'neath the broad clover
leaves,
And when it is over are gay as you please.

So happy and gay in the bright summer weather,
These two little lovers are talking together;
Our blithesome young Timothy bowing to meet
His dear little sweetheart—the fair Marguerite.

MY VALENTINE

I wooed her in the spring-time,
When oft we chanced to meet;
No violet beneath the grass,
Was, than my love, more sweet.

I wooed her in the summer,
Bright days 'neath sunny skies;
When oft, I thought, their azure depths
Had rested in her eyes.

I wooed her in the autumn,
With red and gold aflame;
The color in my lady's cheeks,
The maples, turned to shame.

I wooed her in the winter,
When snow was in the air;
No white flake, fall'n from heaven's pure breast,
Was, than my love, more fair.

Then, when St. Valentine's was come,
I could no longer wait;
So praying Cupid's tender aid,
I went to learn my fate.

"Sweet maid," I cried, "O pity me,
And be my Valentine;
Give me your heart, or I must die,
For you have taken mine."

I saw the merry, winsome smile,
That 'round her sweet mouth crept,
And yet I felt the tender look
Which in her blue eyes slept.

And when she spoke, 'twas this she said:—
"An adage old I find
Is very true; 'tis proved by you:
It is that, 'Love is blind.'"

"Were it not so, you would have seen,
This foolish heart of mine,
You won from me a year ago;
'Tis *last* year's Valentine."

THE UNFORTUNATE

He woke one morn and found himself a man,
Who, would he live, must earn his daily bread;
He scorned the manual labor of the fields;
He scorned the lowly life his parents shared:
He left the country, made so fair by God,
To all its beauties strangely, sadly blind;
Within the man-made town he thought to live;
He went, and lo, he left his life behind.

At first with pulses quickened by the rush
And mighty turmoil of the city's life,
He joined exulting with the surging crowd,
Which plunges daily in a gasping strife;
Where thousands fighting for life's endless needs;
The weak along the wayside fall and faint,
And victors bearing off their hard-won gains,
Bear with them oft dishonor's foul taint.

He was but one, in thousands; no man cared
For this poor atom, borne upon the tide;
He plunged into the maelstrom of despair,
And wondered that ere born he had not died.
At last he hung upon the whirlpool's edge,
Temptation bore him down with deadening weight,
No longer did he lift his heart to God;
Who in that mighty crowd would mourn his fate?

And then, one spoke to him, and stretched a hand
To draw him back from that engulfing sea;
He felt that strange, instinctive love of life,
Because he knew one cared that he should be.
So he arose, a man again, and strove
In this new life to bear his proper part;
And through the darkness saw one gleam of light,
Because he loved, and held a woman's heart.

Too proud to labor in the verdant fields
Which God had given for his free estate;
He searched the city for some means of life;
His heart oft filled with fear or biting hate.
He saw the eyes of her he loved grow sad
With want and sickness and the heart's deep pain;
He heard his children cry to him for bread;
He stumbled, rose, and struggled on again.

He struggles thus, through days and nights, like
years;

Not like the days, whose birth the rising sun
Heralds, and shines upon, and sinks to rest
In floods of glory when its course is run;
But day, which, through the city's fog and smoke,
Looks down upon its turmoil and its strife,
The ceaseless noise, the suffering and death,
That make the city's never-resting life.

And when the evening falls, it is not lit
By twinkling stars, the azure depths within;
But rows of man-made lights, there, seem to strive
To search the midnight for man's pain and sin.
'Tis not the night when, resting from his toil,
Man feels upon his brow the night-wind's breath,
But darkness, that in many a crowded court
Is but the harbinger of crime and death.

This is the life he leads; and so he stands
A man bent low, and aged before his time;
Body and soul o'er-weighed with suffering,
And knowledge of a great world's sin and crime.
Sometimes in restless, wakeful midnight hours,
A strange, faint mem'ry haunts his fevered mind,
Of that fair country, God had given him,
And of the life he blindly left behind.

Who made him thus? who planted in his soul,
The hunger for a life God had not given?
A hunger that is never satisfied,
Though men may strive for it, and long have striven.
Where shall the blame be laid, when he shall stand
A record of his poor, sad life to give?
O God, be pitiful of his mistakes,
And grant to him the Better Life to live.

HILL AND PLAIN

I

Once on a time I dwelt,—or dreamed I dwelt
In a fair land, where all was light and love;
Bright flow'rs sprang budding from the verdant
earth,

The sun shone gold, from azure skies above.
The day was full of joy, and with the birds
I caroled songs of happiness and life;
I breathed the free air of the mountain heights,
And reckoned not of pain and care and strife.
Gazing to where the everlasting hills
Reflected hour by hour the sun's bright glow,
I little dreamed of darkness, which enshrouds,
And shadows, such as filled the plain below.
For, when the sun was set, the silver moon
Shed over all its pure and radiant light,
Or else the golden stars from heaven's high dome,
Spoke, with the mystic voices of the night.
O, happy days, and nights of wondrous dreams!
O, joyous heart, that with such gladness burned!
To live upon the hill-tops passing fair;
To love, and know that pulsing Love returned!

II

I dwell no longer on the mountain-tops;
Now, where the shadows of the lowly plain
Let but the fleeting sunshine light the way,
I learn the mysteries of life and pain.
And yet it seems, my heart more quickly leaps
In sympathy with those who gladness find;
While to the sorrows of a breaking heart,
My own can never more be deaf or blind.

They were not all in vain, those happy days,
Which oft seem, now, but fancy's gladsome dream:
The mysteries of Life are only read
By that clear light which from the Past doth stream.
And when my heart cries out in bitter pain,
In hungry longing, which is weary strife,
In fierce desire to see, and hear, and feel,
All that which once was joy and hope and life,
I creep to where the shadows of the plain
Are pierced by sunlight, and I see it still—
Though dimmed by tears and memory's mist-blue
haze—
The outline of a Heaven-kissing Hill.

THE RIGHT WAY

Psalm cvii:7; Authorized Version

He led them forth; the mighty host went up,
Led by the power of Jehovah's hand;
Out from Egyptian bondage and from death,
Up towards the free and glorious Promised Land.
In the Right Way He led them, and the sea
Rolled back its waters at the Lord's command;
And Israel, doubly rescued and released,
Rejoiced and sang upon the farther strand.
He led them forth; the Right Way clearly shown
By pillars of that Cloud and wondrous Light;
They need not fear the perils of the day,
Or wander, falt'ring, in the pathless night;
For the great God their Guide and Leader was;
They might go forth rejoicing on their way.
Jehovah led them through Egyptian Night,
On towards the glories of the promised Day.

And yet, behold them wand'ring from the path,
Crying aloud for rest, and drink, and food;
E'en to it's bondage would they fain return,
For Egypt's flesh-pots seem exceeding good.
Tempting the Lord, refusing to be led,
When almost at their journey's end they stand,
Oppressed with fears, losing all faith and hope,
They leave the entrance of the Promised Land.
Weary and fearful, sickened unto death,
Feeling the heavy chastening of the Lord,
Struggling to rise and stumbling on the way,
They cry at last, for guidance, to their God.

And doth He hear? Ah, yes, for He hath been
Guiding them still, through all those journeys drear;
Though they refused to listen to His voice,
Yet was the Lord Jehovah ever near.
He fed them with the bread from Heaven and ope'd,
To give their children drink, the rock of stone.
Through forty years He saved their wayward feet
From many a pitfall seen or all unknown.
They, in their blindness had refused to see
The Cloud and Light which still the hosts did lead;
They would not hear the Voice which bade them
 come,
Or know the Love which did their hunger feed.
Yet when they turned in suffering and woe,
They found the Lord Jehovah, and they knew
That by His might and guidance, had the Hosts
Of Israel been led the journey through.

And lo, the journey ended, and the Hosts
Brought to the entrance of that Land renowned,
Enter and rest; their weary wand'rings o'er,
A City for their Habitation found.
Those journ'yings in the dreary wilderness,
The darkened nights and burdens of the day,
Have brought them to a Land and City fair;
For He hath led them forth in the Right Way.

II

Oft in our lives the day seems sad and drear,
Or darkness shrouds us like an endless night;
We falter, wand'ring farther from the path,
We cannot find the way or see the light.
Weakened and fevered with the constant pain
Which is so oft a portion of our life,
Our suff'ring bodies burden us so sore,

We feel no strength to carry on the strife.
The mind oppressed by strange and awful fears
Shrinks, as from enemies on every hand;
While bound and fettered thus, the soul's dim sight
Cannot behold the far-off Promised Land.

Could we but realize that the Lord is near;
That He doth know our sore and weary plight;
That he but waits our cry for help to Him,
To pierce the darkness and to give us light.
The Living Waters freely flow for us;
With Bread of Heaven the Lord our souls would
feed;

Our wand'ring, weary feet His love would guide;
His great and tender strength supply our need.
Knowing all this, we should pursue our way,
As children led by a dear Father's hand:
The journey would not be so sore, and we
Should have a vision of the Promised Land.

So on our way, by heavenly Manna fed,
Refreshed by Elim's palms and waters clear,
We shall ascend the everlasting hills,
Whence we behold the Heavenly Country near.
The City of our Habitation there,
The New Jerusalem, upon our eyes shall shine,
And One Who as a Man, the way did tread,
Shall welcome us with tenderness divine.
Then shall we know the Why-fore of our life;
How all those journ'ings of the night and day
Were used, in tender mercy by our God,
To lead us on along the King's Highway.



Rand, Elizabeth H.
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